

Thank you for this opportunity and the honor to address the House Education Committee in support of HB 4493.

My name is Corey Harbaugh and I am Director of Teaching and Learning at Fennville Public Schools, a small, rural district in western Allegan County. I am also here today in my roles as Holocaust educator, scholar, and teacher trainer.

I will state from the beginning that I support the effort underway for Michigan to become the seventh state in the nation to require Holocaust and genocide ed. I believe in passing it we make a big statement about the place of human history in our curriculum, even as our schools work to rise to the challenge of STEM education, robotics, early childhood education, and other initiatives. But I will end my remarks with a caution about the bill, though it will come in the form of a request.

Of course it should always be a careful and thoughtful decision when lawmakers mandate elements of the curriculum, and mandates have to be done as efforts to strengthen support for the efforts of teachers to be effective, and not supplant them. I believe HB 4493, as written, provides for that support by creating a 15-member panel to further investigate and provide resources for teachers who will look to put this law into effective practice in Michigan classrooms.

I also believe the timing for this bill is right. The State Board of Education is currently considering an update to K-12 Social Studies standards, and will take action on these standards later this school year. The standards include a connection to the C3 Framework, designed to help students better prepare for college, career, and civic life by asking teachers and students to think critically and pursue deep questions in a strategy called "the arc of inquiry", to effectively become historians in their classrooms rather than passive recipients of history education. HB 4493 presents a rich opportunity to apply the C3 Frameworks, to pursue the deep questions of history in primary documents and readings in social studies and English classes, in civics, and many other areas of true inquiry. That HB 4493 is being considered at the same time as our new K-12 Social Studies curriculum is a benefit to both efforts.

I am one of two teachers in Michigan who serve as Regional Educators for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. The other is Margaret Lincoln in Battle Creek. As Regional Educators we are tasked with providing, training, connections, and resources that create responsible, historically-accurate methodology in Holocaust education. In 2014 as a museum teacher fellow, I conducted a national study of Holocaust education in American classrooms and learned a great deal about the conditions, influences, and methods of Holocaust education. I learned that teachers want more time and opportunity to teach about the Holocaust, they want training and resources, and they want a clear mandate. HB 4493

provides for all of the above. I would be glad to provide you with the complete text of the report based on my study which was published earlier this year.

I am also a Master Teacher of the USC Shoah Foundation, the foundation established by Steven Spielberg after *Schindler's List*, dedicated to the use of survivor testimony in Holocaust education. Three weeks ago Mr. Spielberg was in Detroit to present an Ambassador of Humanity award to William Clay Ford, Jr., and at that event I spoke about the educational power of the human story in Holocaust testimony. And then earlier this week a study by neuroscientists found that watching Holocaust survivors tell stories of gratitude increased feelings of gratitude in viewers, effectively helping build neuro-pathways that lead to gratitude and empathy for others. Though the research is brand new, I am excited that this is another possible, powerful outcome of Holocaust education for Michigan students.

Last but not least I am Co-Director of the Holocaust Educator Network of Michigan, an arm of the Memorial Library of New York City. In that role every summer I run a grant-funded, teacher-training program for Michigan teachers at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills. We have trained teachers in Holocaust education from all over Michigan in the last five years: from counties that border Indiana and Ohio, to the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula: urban, rural, and suburban schools, public, private, and charter schools, elementary to university.

One of the most important lessons that I have learned working with teachers from all over Michigan is that Holocaust education can and must meet local needs, no matter where that education takes place. In our program we insist our teachers consider Holocaust education from a local perspective. HB 4493 provides for that local relevance. It can be a very different thing to teach about the Holocaust in a community like Fennville, which is 50% Latino, than it is to teach about the Holocaust in a white-majority community, or in one of the communities in our state with a large Native American population, or African American population, or in a place like Dearborn with a large and vibrant population of American Muslims.

Three weeks ago I saw the powerful work of students in Dearborn and Detroit connect lessons from Holocaust survivor testimony to the grit and determination of US civil rights leaders like Rosa Parks. It was incredible to see an African-American teenager in Detroit in 2015 connect people and events from Alabama, 1955, to 1945 Europe, and then claim all of those histories as his own, and connect them all to his place in the future of our world. That's what I mean about local relevance. Holocaust education is rooted in identity, and identity development is the chief task of students in the very grades covered by HB 4493.

I am often asked *why the Holocaust*; what makes the Holocaust so important to study when there were genocidal events that took place both before the Holocaust and since. And often people point out that there are world events taking place right now every bit as horrific as

events that happened in Europe in the 1930's and 1940's. I expect the members of this committee will be asked many of those same questions. They can be very personal questions, and they can be very political.

But I answer that question pedagogically, meaning, I answer that question in the way it makes sense to me as an educator. The Holocaust exists in the right place for teachers and students to approach it as a complex and dynamic historical event, from multiple perspectives, and with a huge, established body of research and documentation behind it that continues to grow to this day. As long as people study the creation of what we call the modern world, the Holocaust will exist in the dark center of that study, allowing for clear connections to all the genocidal events that happened before, during, or after. A study of the Holocaust does not preclude a study or understanding of other genocides; rather, it creates an intellectual framework that allows for and very often leads to a study of other occasions of violence, hatred, and injustice.

So that is how I answer when I am asked why the Holocaust. When taught responsibly and well students leave their study of the Holocaust wanting to learn more about the past, present, and future of the world, and about people who once seemed so far away in place and time, and often as very culturally distinct. The arc of inquiry in Holocaust education always leads to more questions, not easy answers, and questions lead to critical thinking.

So here is my caution about this bill, in the form of a request. If this bill becomes law, there will, of course, be an effort made by schools to incorporate it. But it has to be done carefully, and well, and not in a rush. In my work I have encountered a fair amount of what I would call "bad Holocaust education." The Holocaust can be taught in a way that is sensational, even traumatic, that does more damage than good. That happens, for instance, when a teacher shows photos from concentration camps to young students who experience those images as trauma, or when a teacher narrates the Holocaust like a fireside ghost story with Hitler as the monster, rather than as a complex history where the line between good and evil ran through so many human hearts and choices, or when teachers present inaccurate history or Holocaust as a fable, like it is portrayed in several popular films. This bill cannot be allowed to lead to "bad" Holocaust education that is done quickly, without support, without structure or resources or training for teachers who will want to teach the Holocaust and other genocides well.

As you consider this bill and as you move it forward, please be sure to continue to provide for the kind of deliberation and planning for support that will happen with the creation of a 15-member task force dedicated to planning for and providing support to teachers across the state. With the right supports in place, this bill can have the impact the authors intend, and outcomes in the classroom that change students, classrooms, communities, and lives.

Thank you.

